

## Chapter 2.0

### REGIONAL CONTEXT

#### 2.1 Introduction

The Town of Bedford is located in northern Westchester County, forty miles north of New York City, and is considered by some a gateway to New England. It is approximately thirty-nine square miles in size, and is intersected by the Saw Mill River Parkway and Interstate 684. Its neighbors are the Westchester municipalities of Town/Village of Mt. Kisco and the Towns of New Castle, North Castle, Somers, Pound Ridge and Lewisboro. (See Figure 2.1). Bedford's ultimate land use pattern will be shaped not only by local actions but by regional and extra-municipal actions. The purpose of this section is to understand the underlying planning philosophy guiding the policies and actions of other agencies and organizations where they may have an impact on Bedford. Those agencies and organizations are Bedford's six municipal neighbors, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, and Westchester County. This section also incorporates policies of the of the Regional Plan Association, where these support the town's own policies. The following discussion moves from the regional to the local level in order to understand the various factors that support or may have an impact on Bedford's land use planning.

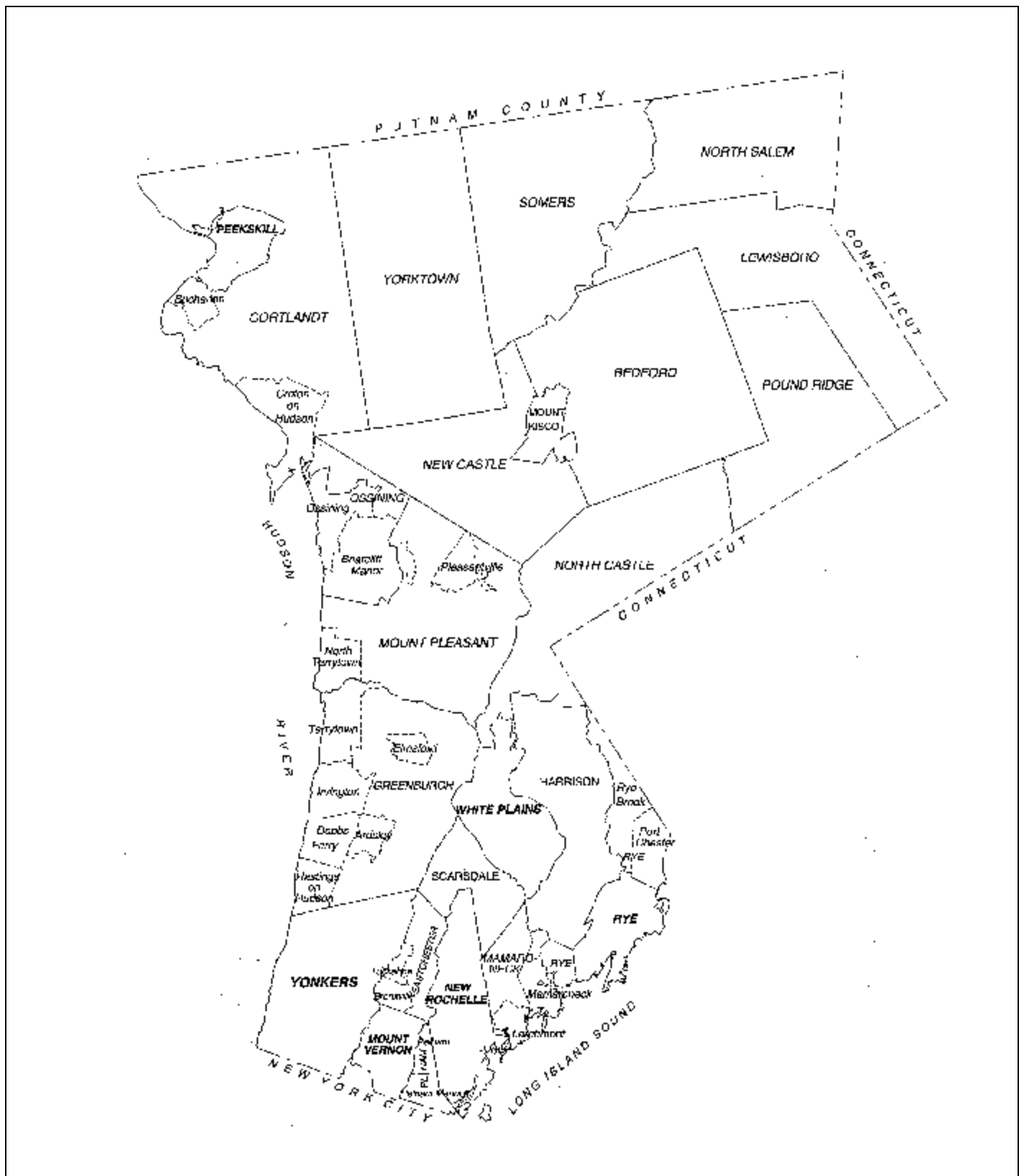
#### 2.2 Regional Plan Association: A Region At Risk

Since 1922, the Regional Plan Association (RPA) has issued three plans that provide a regional perspective on land use issues in the 31-county New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan area. The Third Regional Plan, *A Region at Risk* (1996), presents a broad vision for improving regional quality of life and competitiveness within a global economy. The plan's specific recommendations, expressed as Campaigns, support Bedford's own policies of strengthening the established hamlets, avoiding the development of new hamlets or centers, and reliance on rail travel to connect the town to the employment centers of White Plains and New York City and to ensure Katonah's and Bedford Hills' viability.

*A Region at Risk* discusses several general demographic trends in the county and the county's relationship to the region. As of the 2000 census, Westchester County had a population of 923,459 persons, an increase of 5.5% since 1990. While the detailed 2000 census data are not yet available, it is expected that the county's job count, median home value, and standard of living have also increased. Suburban growth pushed north in Westchester as the edge of housing development moved further away from Manhattan and White Plains. In response, the plan set forward five campaigns to achieve RPA's goals. Three of the Campaigns support recommendations within this comprehensive plan:

##### Greensward Campaign

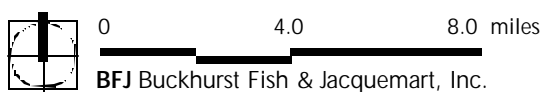
*A Region at Risk* identifies a network of existing and proposed greenways and greenspaces that together would constitute a regional Greensward. (See Figure 2.2; Bedford is indicated on this summary map.) RPA's plan supports the open space recommendations contained in Chapter 4.0 and the watershed recommendations in Chapter 7.0 of this comprehensive plan.



Town of Bedford Comprehensive Plan  
Town of Bedford, NY

Figure 2.1 Regional Context

 Town of Bedford Boundary



Source: Patterns for Westchester, 1996  
Westchester County Department of Planning



Town of Bedford Comprehensive Plan  
Town of Bedford, NY

Figure 2.2 Greensward Plan, RPA, 1996



## Centers Campaign

Vital downtowns are one of the region's great strengths. These range from the important employment and shopping destination of White Plains to small centers such as Katonah, Bedford Hills and Bedford Village. The regional plan and the town plan both present a major development objective: residential growth and commercial growth should occur in the hamlets - particularly those with Metro-North stations - and not in new developments in the open countryside or along highways.

## Governance Campaign

The Governance Campaign seeks to overcome the conflicts created by home rule (the capacity of local governments to control development within their municipal borders nearly without interference from larger jurisdictions). The conflicts usually concern lack of coordination and consistency among the region's governmental units with regard to land use decisions. RPA views this system as an obstacle to the region's economic competitiveness and sustainability. While Bedford in no way foregoes its responsibility to control land use decisions within its boundaries, it recognizes a larger responsibility to the region. Specifically, this comprehensive plan addresses watershed and affordable housing issues. These are important concerns that involve all of Westchester County, other New York counties, New York City, and Connecticut.

## 2.3 Westchester County Planning Strategies

### Patterns for Westchester

Published in 1996, *Patterns for Westchester: The Land and the People* proposes a set of strategies through which county and municipal governments may implement their common goals for serving people, conserving land and water, and assuring economic growth. *Patterns* is a well-written regional document that can provide to the thoughtful developer a good development guideline. The crucial strategy for achieving *Patterns'* goals is to strengthen existing centers and corridors of development. This objective supports a very similar goal of Bedford's comprehensive plan. This support is crucial, as the county can involve itself in Bedford's site-specific land use decisions. The county has two sources of influence. When considering distributing grants or funding assistance for local planning efforts, the county can look at whether these local efforts conform to the vision set forth in *Patterns*. Second, through Article 239-m of the state's General Municipal Law, the county's planning department has mandatory review over certain proposed planning and zoning actions that occur within 500 feet of a municipal boundary and state and county facilities. These actions include the adoption of Bedford's comprehensive plan, and the issuance of site plan approval, special permit, or variance for property within 500 feet of a municipal boundary, county or state park or recreation area, county or state roadway, county-owned stream or drainage channel, or county or state-owned land on which a public building or institution is situated. If the county does not approve the proposed action, it can require that the referring local board approve the action by a majority plus one vote of all board members. Westchester County has exercised its right under Article 239-m in disapproving local comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and a high-profile retail proposal in New Rochelle that would have eliminated a neighborhood.

The health of the county's economy and environment depends on measures to protect the historic pattern of centers, corridors, and open space. The basic premise of *Patterns* is that existing centers



can support commercial and economic growth, that existing strip development can be reshaped to capture some benefits of centers, and that not all land uses are appropriate to all locations. From this perspective, hamlets and small towns function as service centers and remain the optimum locale for development investment. Bedford Hills and Katonah are shown in *Patterns* as small local centers which have a well-defined downtown business district including small-scale offices, retail stores, supermarkets, libraries, other public buildings and “over the store” residential uses. (See Figure 2.3). Bedford Village is shown as a hamlet that offers basic facilities such as a post office, municipal buildings, houses of worship and local retail stores. However, few Westchester hamlets have the necessary infrastructure to support substantial additional development. This includes Bedford’s hamlets of Katonah, Bedford Hills, and Bedford Village. Bedford notes that *Patterns* indicates a range of land use densities typically found in the county’s local centers and hamlets. This range does not correspond to that found in Bedford’s zoning within the hamlets. This comprehensive plan does not propose to increase or decrease the town’s existing land use densities.

## Affordable Housing

For Bedford, the two most significant aspects of *Patterns* are the county’s affordable housing and transportation programs. The housing strategy encourages a range of housing types that are affordable to renters and homebuyers, with each municipality addressing its needs for designated affordable housing as well as a share of the regional need. The County Administration’s Affordable Housing Plan calls for the countywide provision of 5,000 affordable units by 2000 (at a price or rent that does not exceed 30% of the gross income of income-eligible households). The plan is in response to a Housing Needs Assessment study commissioned in 1989 by the County Board of Legislators and to a Statement of Need adopted by the County Board in 1992. Seeking local cooperation, the county established the Housing Opportunity Commission. In September 1997, the Westchester County Housing Opportunity Commission published *Housing Opportunities for Westchester: A Guide to Affordable Housing Development*. The commission helps to secure municipal consensus regarding the allocation of a share of the 5,000 units. As of March 2000, 24 municipalities had adopted formal resolutions supporting their role in providing designated affordable housing to meet county-wide and local needs.

Based on the commission’s allocation estimate for the period 1990 to 1999, Bedford should have provided 198 designated affordable housing units by 2000. Bedford has seen the construction of 68 affordable housing units, 34% of its allocation. This is more than surrounding northern Westchester municipalities, with the exception of New Castle which built 65 units or 39% of its allocation. One example of affordable housing in Bedford is the Doyle Building in Katonah. The rehabilitation of this building contributed significantly to the revitalization of its neighborhood. It was converted from a one-family house to two one-bedroom units and two two-bedroom units. The project was funded through a Community Development Block Grant, the County Housing Implementation Fund, a New York State Housing Trust grant and conventional financing. Another example of affordable housing in Bedford is the EL Zoning District, which increased housing opportunities for the elderly population. Because many elderly live on limited incomes, it is the intent of the town to provide the lowest cost housing possible in this district. The Town Board, with the cooperation of the town’s Blue Mountain Housing Corporation and other involved agencies, will work to provide housing for those elderly with limited financial means. Local regulations ensure that projects will be economically and environmentally sound without imposing a financial burden on the developer.

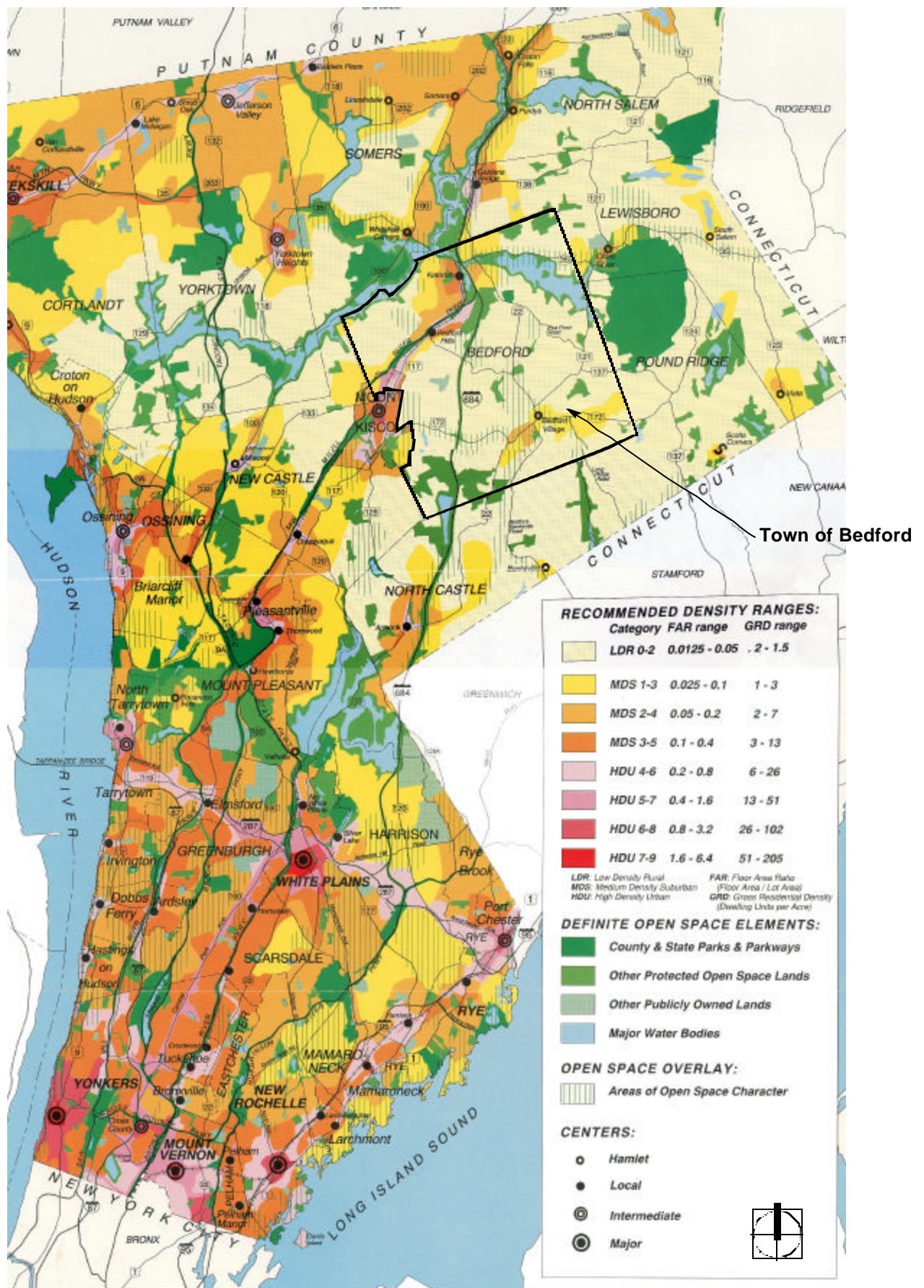


Figure 2.3 Patterns Map, Westchester County Department of Planning, 1996.

## Transportation Strategy

*Patterns'* transportation strategy supports serving the needs of workers, consumers, and residents, and improving air quality by enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of public transportation and by reducing solo-driving. Other goals are 1) to enhance the appropriate functions of the county's corridors, such as Route 117 between Mt. Kisco and Bedford, 2) to adapt already developed road sections into safe, efficient and attractive multi-use places, 3) to protect the quality of scenic routes, and 4) to improve roads and transit to reduce congestion and ease movement on travel routes.

### 2.4 Watershed Planning Regulations Affecting Drinking Water Supplies

Bedford's land area occupies three separate watersheds. These are explained in Chapter 7.0, along with the concerns and recommendations for watershed protection. For two of the watersheds - the Mianus River and the Byram Lake - Bedford acts independently in its protection efforts, largely without regulatory oversight. For the Croton Watershed, the regulatory oversight exercised by New York City over Bedford is substantial. Thus, the Croton Watershed protection program and its various initiatives are detailed here; they create a web of extra-municipal regulations within which Bedford makes its land use decisions.

#### New York City Water Supply Watershed

The New York City water supply system provides 1.4 billion gallons of high quality drinking water to nine million New Yorkers every day, including almost one million in Westchester, Putnam, Orange, and Ulster counties. The source of this water supply is a network of 19 reservoirs in a 2,000 square-mile watershed that extends 125 miles north of New York City. The Croton system, the city's first upstate supply, provides about 10% of the daily consumption from 12 reservoirs and three controlled lakes in Putnam and Westchester counties. Most of the Bedford's land area is located in the Croton watershed. (See Figure 2.4.)

In 1989, the city developed a comprehensive, long-range watershed protection program to ensure that New Yorkers will enjoy high quality water for the next century. The program began in 1989 with most of the components funded by the city being established in the early 1990s. These comprise upgrading sewage treatment plants that the city owns and operates, rehabilitating and upgrading city-owned dams and water supply facilities, and implementing the Watershed Agricultural Program. The Watershed Agricultural Program is an upstate/downstate collaboration based on the idea that voluntary partnerships may protect water quality as effectively as regulatory restrictions.

**Watershed Memorandum of Agreement.** The concept of voluntary partnerships and locally-based watershed protection programs was expanded and formalized in the *Watershed Memorandum of Agreement* signed in January 1997. The New York City Watershed Agreement unites watershed communities, including Bedford, with New York City, New York State, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and environmentalists in support of an enhanced watershed protection program. It defines the scope and implementation process for three principal elements of the watershed protection program: Land Acquisition and Stewardship Programs, Watershed Protection and Partnership Programs, and Watershed Regulations. In the Land Acquisition Program, the city can acquire, through purchase or conservation easements, interests in undeveloped land near reservoirs, wet-



Town of Bedford Comprehensive Plan  
Town of Bedford, NY

Figure 2.4 Croton Watershed Area

 Town of Bedford Boundary



BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.



lands and watercourses, or land possessing certain other natural features that are water quality sensitive. Towns and villages can exclude certain parcels from acquisition by the city through outright purchase, but not through conservation easements.

The Watershed Protection and Partnership Programs promote and institutionalize watershed-wide cooperation and planning. They also provide for the establishment of several locally-based watershed protection initiatives, funded by the city, in an effort to build a strong working relationship between the city and its upstate neighbors, like Bedford. New York City will also spend approximately \$70 million on water quality planning and infrastructure improvement projects through direct agreements with Westchester and Putnam Counties. Partnership programs include septic system inspection and rehabilitation, construction of new, centralized sewage systems and extension of sewer systems to correct water quality problems, stormwater management measures, environmental education, improved storage of sand, salt and de-icing materials, and stream corridor protection projects. These watershed initiatives will improve the protection of the city's water supply while permitting responsible development and community revitalization in existing population centers. Bedford should aggressively pursue DEP funding or other fundings sources to correct long-standing water quality problems.

**Croton Plan.** Part of the Agreement requires the preparation and implementation of a *Comprehensive Croton System Water Quality Protection Plan*. The Croton Plan is a voluntary, cooperative initiative among the watershed towns and counties and the City of New York that will result in the development of a comprehensive, locally-based watershed protection program. Westchester County has begun to prepare a plan in conjunction and in consultation with local municipalities, including Bedford. The program will protect and enhance water quality, identify measures to protect the character of communities, and consider special community needs. As part of the Croton Plan process, municipalities may choose to review and amend their comprehensive plans, analyze their local ordinances and land use controls to determine if changes should be made, inventory water quality problems at the local level and propose methods to address concerns, identify specific investments to correct existing water quality problems, and develop education initiatives to promote water quality protection. Bedford and its adjacent watershed communities meet to discuss their role in the watershed protection program, and how the Croton Plan fits into the comprehensive plan update process. As outlined in the Agreement and Watershed Regulations, the Croton Plan documents outlining the watershed protection program will be completed by 2002 following a public review process and State Environmental Quality Review. At that point, Bedford may wish to update this plan so that the plan's environmental planning policies and recommendations agree with the watershed protection program.

Another important aspect tied to the New York City watershed agreement is a document issued by the Environmental Protection Agency called the *Filtration Avoidance Determination* (FAD). It will allow New York City to continue to avoid the filtration of drinking water taken from the Catskill/Delaware system. Currently, the FAD Memorandum of Agreement does not include the Cross River Reservoir (a large part of northern Bedford is in the watershed of this reservoir.) However, EPA believes that the Cross River Reservoir should be considered part of the Catskill/Delaware water supply system for purposes of filtration avoidance. If this is true, New York City might assist Bedford more than other Westchester towns with land acquisition and seeking financial aid to protect safe, high quality drinking water in the watershed area.

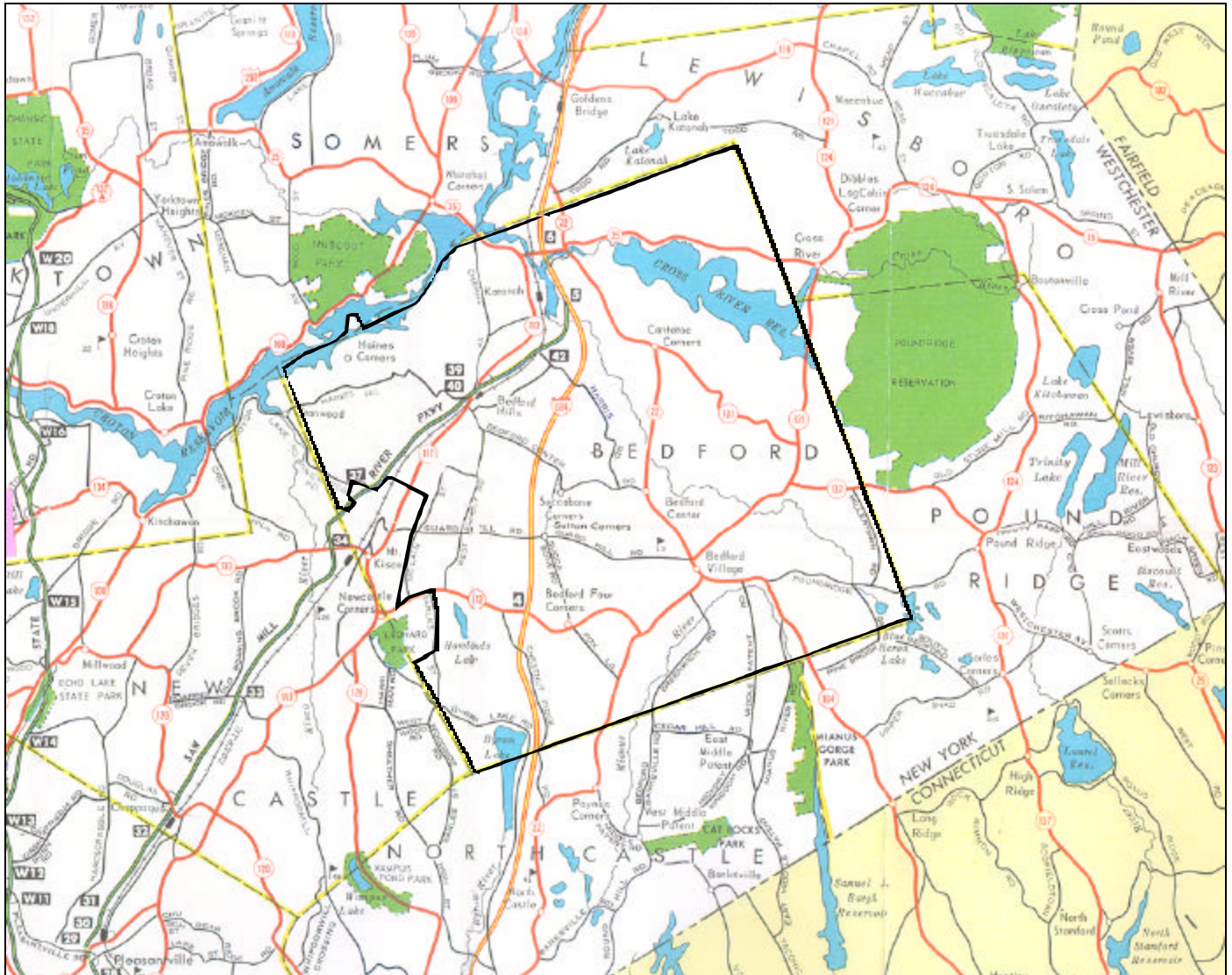
## 2.5 Surrounding Municipalities

As an aggregate, the northern Westchester municipalities are distinctly different from those in southern Westchester in that they are characterized by low-density residential development and large, undeveloped open areas providing opportunities for recreation, enjoyment, and development. Bedford's neighbors are the New York municipalities of the Town/Village of Mt. Kisco and the Towns of New Castle, North Castle, Somers, Pound Ridge and Lewisboro. (See Figure 2.5). The land use policies, immediately abutting zoning, and development decisions of Bedford's municipal neighbors may affect the town and so are of interest to this plan. Their master plans may have an impact on land use decisions, neighborhood character, and traffic in Bedford although Bedford has no direct authority over other municipalities' actions.

Towns and villages surrounding Bedford influence its land use and activity patterns. The discussion below summarizes the main goals of the surrounding towns' master plans and areas where zoning conflicts with that of Bedford's. While most of Bedford's residential zones abut similarly zoned areas in neighboring communities, in some instances residential zoning districts abut non-residential zoning districts. (See Figure 2.6.) This is especially the case with Bedford's border with Mount Kisco where retail and commercial centers border residential areas in Bedford, possibly adversely affecting local community character. Additional office and industrial developments are planned for Mount Kisco. Some other features in neighboring communities that could influence Bedford are the development of campus/office research centers and multi-family housing projects. In Somers, recent development has included the IBM Corporation and Pepsi-Cola Company office complex, two shopping centers, and a new golf course. New building sites for campus/office research centers are being sought along I-684 and Routes 22, 120, and 100.


Mount Kisco and New Castle have reduced some development potential through changes in zoning laws due to concerns about traffic congestion, infrastructure limitations, and community character. Pound Ridge has focused on the importance of environmental and open space character. The town's hydrologic environment is particularly valuable for surrounding towns and the region since water flows from Pound Ridge to watershed reservoirs. The Pound Ridge Reservation is located within the Croton watershed.

**Mount Kisco.** Along its borders with Bedford, Mount Kisco generally retains the same land uses and zoning, although the residential zones are at a higher density in Mount Kisco. There is a small area where a campus, office, research, industrial park zone and a business, office, and commercial zone borders a low-density residential neighborhood in Bedford. There is another small area along the Saw Mill Parkway where a manufacturing, industrial, and warehousing zone borders a low-density residential neighborhood in Bedford. The current Mount Kisco plan states that village character, charm, diversity and social interaction should be retained, and the quality of neighborhoods maintained, restored or enhanced. The range of services, cultural and recreational facilities, and programs and community events will continue to meet the needs of the village. The water supply and natural resources will be protected and improved, and the integrity of scenic vistas and open spaces preserved. The plan's vision is to maintain vibrant downtown and business areas, diverse housing opportunities, and the scale, design and intensity of development compatible with small town community character.



**Town of Bedford Comprehensive Plan**  
**Town of Bedford, NY**

**Figure 2.5 Surrounding Municipalities**

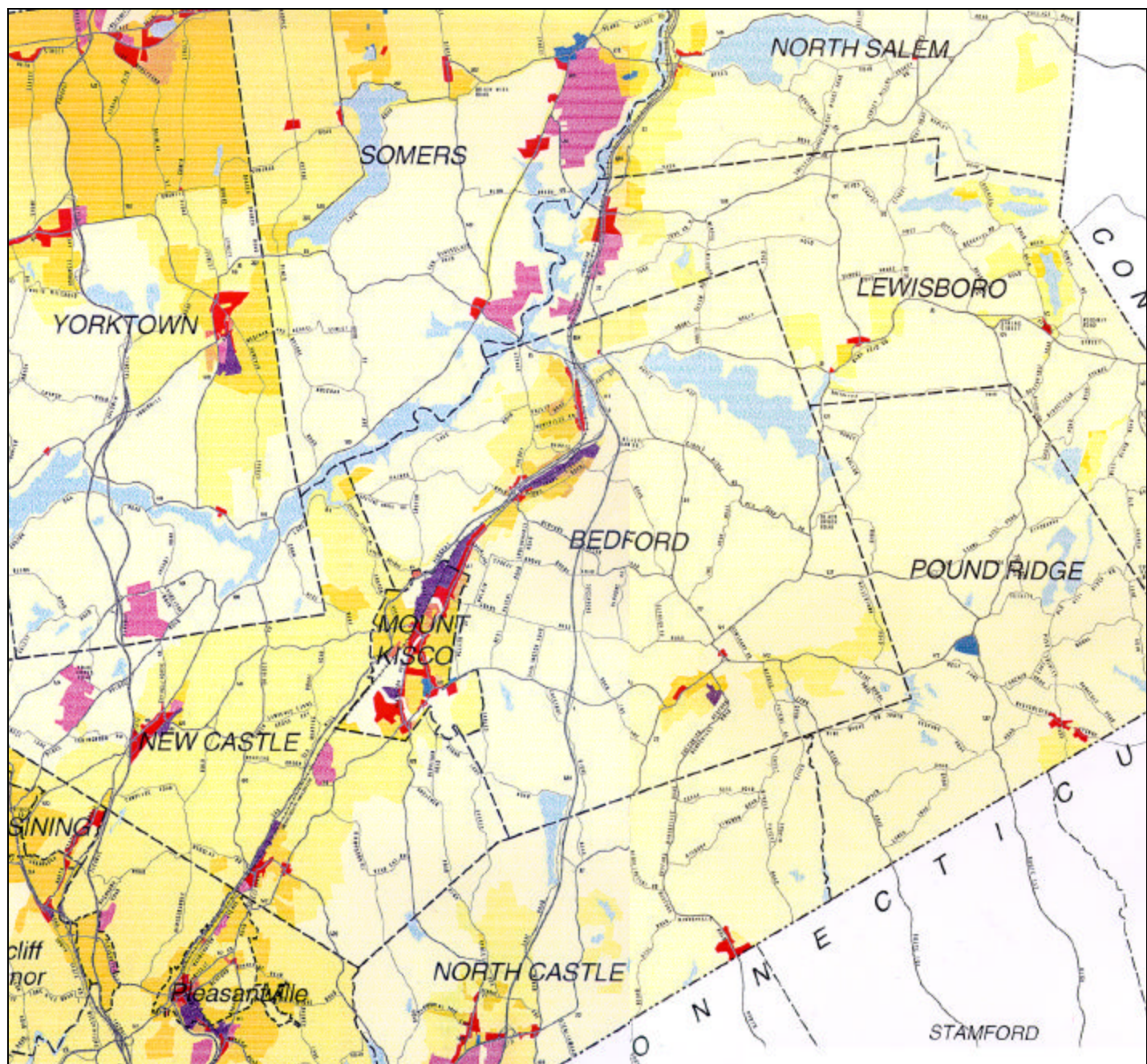
 Town of Bedford Boundary



BFJ Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.

Source: Patterns for Westchester, 1996  
 Westchester County Department of Planning





- Business, Office and Commercial /2
- Manufacturing, Industrial, Warehouse, Storage and Public Utilities
- Other Non-Residential Classifications /3
- Land Area Not Zoned
- Major Water Bodies

- 17 to 49.9 DU's (Minimum Lot Area from 870 sq.ft. to 2,560 sq.ft.)
- 50 and Over DU's (Minimum Lot Area Less than 870 sq.ft.)
- NON-RESIDENTIAL CLASSIFICATIONS**
- Campus Office, Research & Industrial Park /1
- Business, Office and Commercial /2

- RESIDENTIAL CLASSIFICATIONS**  
Dwelling Units (DU) Per Acre
- Less Than 1 DU (Minimum Lot Area Over 1 Acre)
  - 1 to 2 DU's (Minimum Lot Areas of 0.5 – 1 Acre)
  - Over 2 to 8.9 DU's (Minimum Lot Area From 4,900 sq.ft. to 20,000 sq.ft.)
  - 9 to 16 DU's (Minimum Lot Area from 2,720 sq.ft. to 4,800 sq.ft.)

Town of Bedford Comprehensive Plan  
Town of Bedford, NY

Figure 2.6 Generalized Zoning Map



Bedford has two major planning concerns with respect to Mt. Kisco. The first is the disposition of a large commercial facility with limited access on Route 117 that has been empty for some years. The property straddles the two municipalities, with the entrance to the parking lot in Bedford. The second is the potential development of a private golf course near Byram Lake.

**New Castle.** Along its borders with Bedford, New Castle generally retains the same land uses and zoning as does Bedford, although the residential zones along New Castle's northeastern border are a slightly higher density. The southeastern border with Bedford maintains the same low-density zoning. The fundamental concepts of New Castle's town plan are to remain predominantly low-density residential but with a range of housing alternatives; maintain the locally-oriented convenience centers in Chappaqua and Millwood hamlets; restrict office development to sites already zoned to permit these uses; permanently preserve natural and cultural resources; maintain the system of major and collector roads, local roads and pedestrian walkways; acquire sites for community facilities and services to serve the community's growing population; and limit development to areas with a central water supply and sewerage system.

**North Castle.** North Castle has the same low-density residential land uses and zoning as Bedford along their mutual border. North Castle's town plan recommends that the town remain an attractive residential community, maintain the existing hamlet centers as service and higher-density residential areas, maintain the existing office and industrial tax base, maintain the delivery of high-quality municipal services, preserve the environment, and maintain and enhance property values through the creation, revision, and enforcement of effective ordinances.

**Somers.** Somers and Bedford have similar land uses and zoning along their border, with the exception of the Pepsico facility. Somers' plan seeks to maintain the town's predominantly residential community, maintain the town's convenient business areas, preserve the town center hamlet, limit new office/light industrial areas, provide areas for open space and recreation, provide adequate public facilities and utilities, provide adequate transportation, and maintain and enhance community character and appearance.

**Pound Ridge.** Along their border, Pound Ridge and Bedford have generally the same land uses and zoning. However, a residentially-zoned district in the southeastern corner of Bedford borders a lower-density residential area in Pound Ridge. The goals of the Pound Ridge town plan are to protect the environmental quality and the ecological integrity of the town; maintain the single-family residential character; allow apartments as an accessory use over businesses in Scotts Corner; permit a small amount of senior housing; limit retail and service business development to convenience shopping; strive for improvements in aesthetic quality for existing and future development in Scotts Corner; preserve Pound Ridge Hamlet as a community focal point; upgrade, maintain, and expand the town's public facilities; and expand the town's active recreational facilities.

**Lewisboro.** Lewisboro and Bedford have generally the same land uses and zoning along their municipal boundaries. However, there are two residentially zoned areas in Lewisboro which border a lower-density district in Bedford. There is one residentially zoned area in Bedford which borders a lower-density district in Lewisboro, and a campus, office, research, industrial park district that borders a low-density residential zone in Bedford. Bedford expects that development in Lewisboro on Bedford's northeast side will have some impact, and that Lewisboro-generated traffic on Route 35 will have an impact particularly on Katonah, as this route is the main east-west con-

necter between I-684 and the MetroNorth station in Katonah. The Lewisboro comprehensive plan recommends that the town maintain its residential character; preserve the six small neighborhood hamlets, preserve open spaces and natural resources, enhance community character and appearance, and establish a regional position.

**Fairfield County, Connecticut.** Bedford is separated from Fairfield County in Connecticut by Lewisboro and Pound Ridge. However, development here might be expected to have an impact on Bedford and its eastern neighbors. Fairfield County's population growth, and in particular Ridgefield's, has been driven in the last decade by commuter households and the relatively lower property values compared to its Westchester counterparts. Commuting residents in the western edge of Connecticut have direct access to Route 35 and the Katonah train station, and ready access to I-684 and the Merritt Parkway.

## **2.6 Other Planning Efforts and Strategies**

**Open Space Preservation.** Since Earth Day 2000, the Westchester Open Space Alliance, a coalition of local preservation activists, of which Bedford is a charter member, has now grown to include over 20 communities. The Alliance recently spearheaded a community education drive leading to the allocation of \$25 million for open space preservation in ten local municipalities, including Bedford and surrounding towns. These municipalities are now selecting lands to acquire or otherwise protect. The Westchester Open Space Alliance and the Bedford Coalition are working together on planning reforms that would allow municipalities to better coordinate their land use planning and actions as they affect the environment and community character. Bedford should continue to work with the Alliance, both directly and through the town's open space advisory committee.

**Open Space Districts Proposal.** Governor Pataki has introduced legislation to allow municipalities to create open space districts within local towns and villages. Such districts, like Agricultural Districts, would enable property owners to give up development rights for a period of at least ten years, in exchange for a property tax assessment reduction. Bedford should consider whether this would be a cost-effective growth management technique, and if so support enactment of this law proposal.

**Hudson River Greenway Communities Agreement.** New York State's Hudson River Greenway Community Council enters into agreements with municipalities in order to encourage planning reforms along the lines of the Governor's Quality Communities Task Force Report. The Council is encouraging all Westchester municipalities to join by signing such agreements. They are offering planning assistance to member municipalities, making membership advisable.

**Economic Downturn.** The comprehensive plan notes that during past periods of economic downturn, Bedford consistently applied its land use objectives with a view towards the desired long-term development pattern of the town. This plan is no different: in the event of an economic downturn or unexpected development pressures, Bedford will maintain its historic zoning strategy.